

388 CONCERNING THE PORKERS

THE SWINE PLAGUE COMMISSION'S REPORT.

Dr. F. S. Billings Swings His Pen in
His Usual Forceful and Clear
Cut Style.

Some Correspondence Given—Dr. Smith as
the Football of the Chief of the
Bureau of Animal In-
dustry.

Additional Facts.

Under the heading, "The Report Was
Fixed" the editor of THE NEBRASKA STATE
JOURNAL publishes the following in a late
issue:

The suggestion made by THE JOURNAL
after the report of the swine disease com-
mission was published last summer that
some undue influence was exercised on the
members thereof to induce them to
suppress all that they had really found
out by their protracted investigation, is
pretty well borne out by a letter ad-
dressed by a member of the commission
to Dr. Detmers of Columbus on the day
before the report was published. The
letter was as follows:

"AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN,
ILL., Aug. 13, 1889.—My Dear Dr. Det-
mers: I suppose you have seen by the
papers that the report of the 'board of
inquiry concerning diseases of swine'
has been presented to the Washington
authorities, and I suppose too that you
are disappointed at least in my signing
the clause in respect to my work.
Yet I know fully that you would not feel
hard if you knew what I did do and
what I tried to do and failed. I could
not help knowing that the germ you
worked with 1878-80 was the same as that
now held by you to be the cause of the
disease you called swine plague. I knew
this without examination this last winter.
I have not said you are not entitled to
priority in this, neither has the board.
After I want to say as an individual
what I know and what should have been
said in this report.

While I could not help doing what was
done, I was far from satisfied.

As to there being two diseases with
different germs we were all agreed, but
not satisfied as to the commonness of oc-
currence of the one called swine plague
by the Washington folks. We found one
outbreak away from the east where it
had only been found near Washington
and Baltimore. It is not probable that
it is a prevalent and serious malady,
though it seems bad enough when once
introduced to a herd. The most that
troubled me about it was whether or not
it was a peculiar variety of the common
germ. But it has so many points of dif-
ference and holds them so tenaciously in
all process of culture that it seemed to
me impossible to consider them as one
thing in any sense. This one new out-
break was in Kentucky. I wanted to go
back and further study the disease there,
but neither had opportunity or permis-
sion. Hoping to see you soon, I am faith-
fully yours,
T. J. BURRILL."

The language of the letter is positive
proof that the commission was making a
certain sort of report under compulsion,
and as the commission was acting under
the authority of congress and was paid
by an appropriation of \$30,000 made by
congress, THE JOURNAL calls for a con-
gressional investigation of that report
which has cost the country such a smart
sum.

Let the committees on agriculture in
the senate and the house at once look in-
to the matter and see what screw was
loose and see who had sufficient hold on
the members of the commission to force
a crooked report in favor of Mr. Sal-
mon's alleged "germs." Also how it
came that the report of the commission
was to the effect that there were two
"wide spread" infectious swine diseases,
with two different germs, when as a mat-
ter of fact the commissioner owns up that
there was no proof submitted that the so-
called "swine plague" prevailed to any
extent anywhere and was not found
anywhere except "near Washington and
Baltimore." Let congress clear up this
crookedness at once for no more impor-
tant matter can engage the attention of
that body just now than that of the dis-
eases of our domestic animals.

As the editor of THE JOURNAL notices,
this letter was written by Professor T. J.
Burrill on August 13, 1889. Attention
has been frequently called to the fact
that advance sheets of a part of this re-
port only, the so-called "majority re-
port," were sent to certain of the agricul-
tural papers of the country a week or so
in advance of the distribution of the com-
plete document; the public being first in-
formed of it in the issue of the *Breeder's
Gazette* of August 14, 1889, which paper,

as well as others, was so misled by this
advance flyer, that it had to recede from
the tenor of its editorial in its issue of
August 14, and in that of August 21,
asked some very pertinent questions
which have not yet received their an-
swers.

An interesting question is, why should
Professor Burrill feel it necessary to
write such a vacillating and condemna-
tory letter, to Dr. Detmers even before
any part of the report of the commission,
of which he was a member, had been
given to the public? Is it not positive
evidence that Professor Burrill felt the
weakness of his position in that report?
Is it not certain that he felt himself
guilty of doing a great injustice to Dr.
Detmers, as well as to the hog interests
of the country? Does it not show that
he really wanted to be an honest man,
that really he is one, but that lacking
backbone he was forced into doing
things directly contrary to his own
knowledge of what was true and right.

Just at this point I desire to publish a
letter which especially bears upon this
point. It is also directly related to the
previous one by Professor Burrill. I
telegraphed Professor Burrill August
10, 1889, to know what had become of
the Nebraska hogs which the commission
took east and received the following re-
ply:

CHAMPAIGN, ILL., Aug. 10, 1889.—Dear
Doctor: Have just answered your tele-
gram to the best of my ability. When I
saw the pigs no trial had been made up-
on the Nebraskans with Salmon's "swine
plague," and I am quite sure nothing was
said about it to me by Dr. Shakespeare
subsequently. Abundant trial had
been made both by feeding
and by subcutaneous inocula-
tions with the Washington "hog
cholera" without serious effect. None
stood the test so well as those Nebraska
pigs." It is, however, quite possible
that Dr. Shakespeare has tried "swine
plague" (Salmon's) since our correspond-
ence upon the subject. Have not seen
anything in print on report. Am not
certain what publicity has been given.
The two diseases are acknowledged, the
one, however, said to be much more pre-
valent than the other. No attempt is
made in the report to compare European
work, though we did have some cultures
from abroad.

You can understand that it was diffi-
cult to separate workers to make a re-
port. Would liked to have published
full details, but found only certain con-
clusions could be agreed upon, not al-
ways worded as one would do for him-
self. At any rate nothing was consid-
ered except what is the fact. Very
truly yours,
T. J. BURRILL.

From these two letters it is very evi-
dent that there was no uniformity of con-
sensus among the members of the com-
mission, as also from the minority re-
port of Dr. Bolton who did not say much
in favor of a second "wide spread epi-
demic of hogs in this country," as both
Burrill and Shakespeare did in their
majority report, when they falsely say,
"It is the opinion of the commission,
based upon their own individual observa-
tions and examinations of the subject,
that there at least two wide-spread epi-
demic diseases of hogs in this country." The
point of importance to the hog
raisers hinges upon the words, "two
wide-spread epidemic diseases among
hogs in this country," one of which has
been "called by the bureau authorities
'swine plague.'" Attention has been fre-
quently called to the fact that the com-
mission did not examine a single hog in
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas or Mis-
souri, and I have asserted time and
again that they only examined
properly one single hog from a natural
outbreak of hog disease in Nebraska, and
I have lately been told that they did not
make a single examination in Ohio, but
simply looked over some of Dr. Detmer's
slides and preparations. But to add in-
sult to the injury this commission has en-
deavored to do the hog owners of the
country we now find, by Professor Bur-
rill's admission in his letter to Dr.
Detmers, that this second "widespread
epidemic disease among hogs in this
country has only been found near Wash-
ington and Baltimore," and by the com-
mission "in Kentucky," but in how
many hogs "in Kentucky" we are not in-
formed. We do not know whether it
was a herd outbreak or only one or two
individuals; in fact we know nothing
about it and they do not think it of suffi-
cient importance to mention it in their
report. In fact, not having mentioned
this disease in their report, and not hav-
ing a particle of experimental evidence
from the commission in favor of it, we
can say that neither as individuals or as
a board of inquiry have they given a
particle of evidence that they ever saw a
case of that disease. Assertions without
evidence do not count in science.

On the other hand we have other evi-
dence that this second "wide-spread epi-
demic disease" is not an epidemic at all,
and nothing but a very occasional com-
plication or disease which but seldom
occurs anywhere in the country. In
bulletin No. 6, new series ii, July, 1889,
on "Hog Cholera" of the South Carolina
experiment station, Dr. Bolton says:

"The following investigations were be-
gun in November last year and have been
continued up to the present time (about
seven months). In the course of our
work we have visited many widely sepa-
rated portions of the state and encoun-
tered the disease in all its stages."

We would call especial attention to the
last assertion and hence repeat it: "In

the course of our work we visited many
widely separated portions of the state
and encountered the disease in all its
stages." This report then says: "In our
investigations we have tried to discover
the kind of germ or bacteria which cause
the disease. We visited various portions
of the state and took along all the best
apparatus and appliances for our work.
Material collected in this way was
brought back to the laboratory and thor-
oughly examined. The germs which we
found were cultivated and grown on
suitable materials and were tested upon
mice, rabbits and hogs. We obtained
them from the liver, spleen, blood and
intestinal organs. In some cases we
failed to get any germs at all, and al-
though we obtained, in other cases, sev-
eral different kind of germs, we have no
reason to believe that more than one
of them is concerned in the disease."

It would then seem that examinations
of such a character, which extended over
a period of about seven months and to out-
breaks in so many parts of the country,
added to those made by the author, (Dr.
Bolton) as a member of the commission,
should have been extensive enough to
find one single case of that second "wide
spread epidemic disease," which being
"swine-plague" should from its name
be a pest of great danger to the farmers
of this country, but Dr. Bolton's examina-
tions lead, happily to quite a different
result: for, in this S. C. report he says,
after describing the organism he found
that "the only organism deserving special
attention is one which we regard as iden-
tical with the bacillus of hog cholera of
salmon" and in his report, as a member
of the commission he says:

"During my work as commissioner I
have failed to meet with an epizootic
which I am satisfied was what is termed
swine plague in the bureau reports,
though previous to my appointment on
the board I studied one such outbreak.
In this case, however, I directed my at-
tention to the bacteriological questions
exclusively, and I am therefore unable
to pronounce on the difference in the
pathological lesions in the two diseases.
But I am not inclined to attach any great
importance to these differences as set
forth in the reports. The descriptions
otherwise I find correct and well stated.
In my investigations as commissioner I
have been able to find but one organism
which, in my opinion, caused
the outbreaks under examination, and
that I regard as identical with the
hog-cholera germ described in the
reports of the bureau, and I find the de-
scription therein given correct. As will
be inferred from what has gone before,
I feel sure that another organism, cor-
rectly described in the reports as the
'swine-plague germ,' is found under cir-
cumstances which render it highly prob-
able, but not certain, that it also causes
disease."

As to whether these two organisms are
always present and operate together to
cause disease, or whether the two are
merely varieties of the same germ, must
be decided by future investigation. The
differences between them as pointed out
by the bureau are sufficient to compel us
to treat them as different germs, how-
ever perplexing it may seem that two
micro-organisms are capable of produc-
ing such similar or, it may be, identical
lesions."

As to the other organism (Salmon's
swine plague), we wish to call attention
to some very striking inconsistencies in
Dr. Bolton's remarks:

First—He thinks it also "causes dis-
ease." Suppose it does. There are sev-
eral other germs which do cause lesions
in swine plague (hog cholera), and one
which causes very marked lesions, but
yet which have no necessary connection
with the plague, which they did not dis-
cover, though it was shown to them in
Nebraska. There is a vast difference be-
tween causing a local, non-extending
disease and a pest or plague. But Dr.
Bolton is not sure even of this, for he
says further on that he does not know
"whether the two are merely varieties of
the same germ" or not. Again, in one
place he says "but I am not inclined to
attach any great importance to the dif-
ferences (in the pathological lesions) as
set forth in the reports" of the bureau
of animal industry, while in another he
absolutely contradicts himself when he
says "the differences between them (hog
cholera and Salmon's swine plague) as
pointed out by the bureau are sufficient
to compel us to test them as different
germs, however perplexing it may seem
that two germs are capable of producing
such similar or, it may be, identical
lesions."

Now this may at first appear as unin-
telligible as Chocaw to some of our read-
ers, but a little close reading will show
that two members of this commission
were having a very severe struggle with
their consciences while making their re-
port. That Shakespeare has any con-
science at all is not made evident any-
where. In a late publication on swine
diseases by Professor Welch of Johns
Hopkins he asserts that not a single un-
doubted epigraphic outbreak of this sec-
ond swine plague has yet been seen in
this country.

To return to Professor Burrill's letter
to Dr. Detmers, upon a point which
would have neither interest nor value to
the farmers, did it not show most conclu-
sively that Professor Burrill was terribly
conscious that he had given his support
to a false statement. What matters it to
the farmers who first discovered the
germ of hog cholera? Certainly nothing.
But if a man can give false evidence in

one direction, it is to be assumed that his
veracity cannot be trusted in any other.

Why should Professor Burrill have
been so anxious to apologize to Dr. Det-
mers for his actions, even before the re-
port had been given to the public?

It may not be known to but few of our
readers that Professor Burrill worked
more or less with Dr. Detmers when the
latter was studying swine plague at
Champaign, Ill., and this is why Burrill
wrote Detmers, "I cannot help knowing
that the germ you worked with 1878-80
was the same as that now held by you to
be the cause of the disease you called
swine plague. I knew this without ex-
amination this last winter. I have not
said that you are not entitled to priority
in this, neither has the board."

Let us see what they did say:

"It is the opinion of the commission
that the microbe that Dr. Detmers at
present regards as the specific cause of
'hog cholera' is probably the
same microbe which is considered by the
bureau authorities as the specific cause
of hog cholera; but, according to the
present requirements of bacterial re-
search and interpretation, it is impossible
to declare that the organism as described
by him in his reports published by the
department of agriculture was the same
thing."

Dr. Bolton says about the same thing.
But these men knew that they were giv-
ing rise to a false impression in order to
support the tottering fabric of the bureau
of animal industry, which they did as
follows:

CONCLUSIONS.

"It is the opinion of the commission,
based upon their own individual observa-
tions and examinations of the subject,
that there are at least two wide-spread
epidemic diseases of hogs in this coun-
try, which are caused by different micro-
organisms, but which have clinical his-
tory and pathological lesions more or less
similar, and very difficult to distinguish
without the aid of a microscope and re-
sort to bacteriological methods; and that
these two epidemic diseases have been
fairly well described in the recent an-
nual reports of the bureau of animal in-
dustry."

In all honesty a man's work must be
judged by the light of his time and if, as
Burrill admits, Dr. Detmers did have the
same germ in 1878-80, then the latter
should have full credit for it, and all
honest investigators have cheerfully
given such credit where it was deserved,
as in the case of Breuel and Pollender,
who discovered the germ of Anthrax in
1855 and 1857 respectively, and is the
case to-day as regards the noted Robert
Koch and his germ of human cholera.
But Salmon seems to have been fully
satisfied with the verdict of the commis-
sion in the name of the bureau, in a late
publication to my mind it is not the dis-
covery of the germ in the liquids of af-
fected animals which entitles a man to
credit, but it is the isolation of the patho-
genic species, its accounts, description
and the production of experimental evi-
dence to show that it causes the disease.

This is all very true, but supposing the
discovery and description is such that
any honest man can and must recognize
their correctness, what then, when mod-
ern methods of isolation and experimenta-
tion had not been developed?

Again we ask had Breuel Pollender
done any of these things with bacillus
anthracis? Has Robert Koch completed
these conditions beyond question with
his celebrated "komma"? Has Dr. Sal-
mon given one single description of the
germ of hog cholera which did not "dif-
ferentiate" from some other germ by the
same author? But we forgot, Dr. Sal-
mon now admits that he has done abso-
lutely nothing, and though the "commis-
sion" almost strangled themselves to give
him credit he now washes his hands
of all credit and blame and puts
it on an unfortunate scarcely men-
tioned in any of the reports, and abso-
lutely not in connection with the discov-
ery of any germ.

Dr. Salmon does it in this manly and
honorable manner in the *Journal of Com-
parative Medicine*, January 1, 1890. "I
may add here, that while the investiga-
tions have been directed by me, and have
been carried out according to my plans,
all the reports from 1885 to 1889, inclu-
sive, so far as they relate to experiments,
bacteriological observations and post
mortem examinations have been written
by Dr. Smith, and consequently all the
criticisms of their contents aimed at me,
personally, fall flat, because I am neither
their author nor have I made any change
in the record of observation."

Why then did this same Dr. Salmon say
in the same journal, April, 1888: "I
have sent to the leading investigators of
Europe cultures of the germ of hog
cholera, together with copies of my re-
port," and again, in the same place,
"Early in 1886 I published a series of
articles in which I demonstrated that
hog cholera was a distinct disease and a
very different disease from rouget or
rothlauf," which fact he only copied
from the work of Schrittz and Loeffler
in Germany published many months pre-
viously? Why then is the "I" of the
bureau of animal industry so suddenly
attended with this wonderful degree of
modesty and self abnegation?

It would be interesting to the public to
know what manner of man this Dr.
Smith can be to be thus made a tool and
foot ball of by the chief of the bureau of
animal industry. FRANK S. BILLINGS.

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Ill.